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Mexican American education in the Southwest has shown a rising determination on the part of educators to implement programs designed to effectively meet the educational needs of bilingual-bicultural students. The most important potential is the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This Act provides the child the opportunity to learn in his mother tongue and learn English as a second language. By changing priorities in present programs, Title I and Title III ESEA funds can be used to support bilingual education programs. (CM)

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Workshop to Develop Human Resources among Mexican-American Teachers in the Denver Metropolitan Area-June 9, 10, 1968

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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MEXICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATION
AN OVERVIEW

A little over a year ago President Johnson said, "The time has come to focus our efforts more intensely on the Mexican-American." I want to present to you what I see as a result of the President's call for action.

Three resource units with specific responsibility to work on the needs of the Spanish-speaking have been set up. The Inter-Agency Committee headed by Vicente Ximenes, Commissioner of Equal Employment Opportunities, has the authority to work on problems at the cabinet level and across departmental lines. The United States-Mexico Commission on Border Development and Friendship has been set up to work on problems common to both governments along the border. Ambassador Telles heads this group. The Mexican-American Affairs Unit, which I head, has been set up in HEW and placed in the Office of Education. Our responsibility is advising OE, HEW, and other agencies on programs related to the education of the Spanish-speaking.

What is the picture of education for the Mexican in the Southwest? I have found during the past year that there is a most encouraging scene for directed improvement of the education of the Mexican-American. There is a rising determination on the part of educators in the Southwest to implement programs designed to more effectively meet the educational needs of the bilingual-bicultural student. This determination is in both new and innovative programs and in expenditures of money. To be specific, these are some statistics in terms of expenditures:

> $5 million in Title I funds went to projects for Mexican-Americans this year.

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28 exemplary and supplementary center projects are for programs directed specifically toward Mexican-Americans.

2 educational laboratories center their work on the needs of Mexican-Americans.

In adult education programs, 50% of the participants in Arizona are Mexican-Americans, in California 62.8%; in New Mexico 35%; in Colorado 25%, and in Texas 70%.

Funding has been made for 13 research projects that are specifically for Mexican-Americans.

In addition, provision has been made for 773 teachers to be trained in institutes between October, 1968, and March, 1969. Forty of these teachers are trained to teach migrants. In another project, 30 Mexican-American youngsters from disadvantaged homes are brought into a college program for each of four years. These people then have a responsibility to return to teach in Mexican-American communities.

In April of this year, a National Conference on the Educational Opportunities for the Mexican-American was held in Austin, Texas with the objective of demonstrating some 26 programs and projects designed to improve the education of the Mexican-American and to describe the Federal Funding Programs that support such projects. Most of you are aware of the enactment of the Bilingual Education Act, now Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Bureau of the Budget has requested that $5 million dollars be appropriated for this act, far below the authorization contained in the legislation passed by Congress. NEA and many other concerned organizations are mounting programs to seek the full authorization of the funding level.

The new Education Profession Development Act holds much promise for improving the educational competence for the Mexican-American. Our Unit is involved in assisting the Bureau of EPDA in evaluating proposals for Mexican-American education in this area, and already when I left Friday proposals for programs for strengthening the education of Mexican-Americans had quadrupled

last year. Last Friday, a meeting with the Library Services and Development Branch of the Bureau of Adult, Vocational Education and Library Services has opened new avenues for expanded attention to the educational services of the Mexican-American.

In Los Angeles this summer at the University of Southern California, a project called HILT, High Intensity Language Training, will be carried out with the specific objective of providing communication competency in Spanish to 60 Third Cycle Interns in the Teacher Corps. These Interns will be working in schools with predominantly Spanish-speaking youngsters. If this program meets our expectations, we feel it holds real promise for serving as a model for both pre-service and in-service language programs for teachers. This is the picture of what holds promise of increased attention and concern for meeting the educational challenges of the bicultural-bilingual child in the Southwest.

But now I want to spend some time talking about what I consider the most important potential for breaking the barrier of cultural and lingustic isolation we have in our hands. I'm talking about the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII, ESEA. It provides a national commitment for important change in the educational policy of most school districts. It gives moral and legislative recognition to the assets of a people whose mother tongue is not English. It may be the first step toward the desireable and attainable goal of a bilingual society. It says to other nations that the United States can and will work toward the education of its people in the richness of differences--not just racial--but linguistic and cultural.

Last night I talked about the need for a new "point of view" for our schools if we were going to be effective as an institution determining direction in our society. I purposely did not spell out techniques for achieving this new "point of view." I outlined the general line of action. I feel that specifics must always be designed by those in the community where action and reaction will occur.

I see bilingual education as a forceful vehicle to assist in the creation of a new "point of view" for the schools in the Southwest. This implies that all of us must be knowledgeable and together on what bilingual education really is. And be ready and willing to sell it to our reluctant colleagues and to the community.

Bilingual education means the opportunity to teach the child educational concepts in all phases of the curriculum in his mother tongue while he is learning English. This means preventing his educational retardation while re-inforcing his language and his culture. It is not foreign language teaching--and it is not done by foreign language teachers. It is the teaching of arithmetic, and science, and history by teachers who speak the mother tongue. It is the teaching of English as a second language.

The basic premise is that of daily instruction in the mother tongue as a language and through the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for all students who are not native speakers of English. In cases where there is a fairly equal group of native speakers of English, and non-English-speakers, a program can be developed where all children can become bilingual. The Coral Way School in Miami is a good example of such a program. For those of you who have an English as Second Language program in your school, you are already partly on the way to bilingual education.

Obviously one of the key ingredients in bilingual education is the teacher who can teach subject matter in the mother tongue of the child. Training or obtaining these teachers will not be easy, but I surmise that many such teachers do exist right now--probably in your school. They need to be found, given some training yet this summer, and bilingual education can start in your schools next fall. And I would urge that you put the priority at the primary grades. Here is a direct action program that can start some changes in "point of view" of school.

This program can be supported by Title I funds. All that is needed is to change some of the priorities in your present program. Take some of the funds set up for remedial reading and use them to prepare materials and teachers to start this youngster in his mother tongue this fall and teach him in it at the same time you teach him English. I am tired of hearing school people say we can't change our programs--that our priorities are set. The priority for the Mexican-American in our schools today is bilingual-bicultural education. You can't wait until new monies may become available--all you need to do is put some new direction, some new use, some new commitment to the old monies. And Title I, ESEA is designed to permit the local school district to use its money as it determines. And it can do this right now. And this is what Congress had in mind with Title I. Title VII, ESEA, is a moral and legal commitment for bilingual education, but Title I, ESEA, is the means for fulfilling a major part of that commitment.

I have been saying for almost a year that we need 100,000 bilingual teachers by 1970, and 90 percent of them competent in Spanish. The six week High Intensity Language Training Project I mentioned earlier is a start in that direction. But I think we now have thousands of bilingual teachers in our schools who do not have the opportunity to use their linguistic ability because there is no program for them. The need is for the school to develop a program, and my guess is that in the process teachers will suddenly be available to put it into operation--even though it may be on a limited basis.

Bilingual education is critical for hundreds of thousands of youngsters. Language is not just an instrument of communication and learning: it is also a total way of thinking, feeling, and acting. It is a set of values. It is the child's being. It is the door that we can open so the youngster can see and live and be a part of two cultures--two societies. Dr. Sabine Ulibarri of the University of New Mexico puts it so well, "In the beginning was the

Word. And the Word was made flesh. It was so in the beginning and is so today. The Language, the Word, carries with it the history, the culture, the traditions, the very life of a people, the flesh."

The child's confidence, his appetite for learning, his joy of existence are all better assured if he is able to communicate in his mother tongue. His understanding of himself as a human being becomes a most dominant factor in his interaction with the society where he must function. Bilingualism must come to be accepted as a blessing--not a curse in our society. It must be cultivated--not neglected.

Commissioner Harold Howe in his keynote address at the National Conference in Austin in April cited three reasons why he sees bilingualism as a great step forward for our country.

> "First, the evidence is clear that people learn languages best if they learn them young. Mexican-American children offer their Anglo classmates a great natural teaching resource. It is time we stopped wasting that resource and instead enabled youngsters to move back and forth from one language to another without any sense of difficulty or strangeness.
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> Second, the proper conduct of bilingual programs should produce a dramatic improvement in the performance of Spanish-speaking children. By "proper conduct" I mean those teaching arrangements which permit a child to begin learning to read and write immediately in Spanish, and learning English in music, art and recreation periods--rather than forcing him to postpone all serious academic work until he learns English.
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> What I see as the third advantage of bicultural-bilingual program for Anglos as well as Mexican-Americans may well be the most important for our country. The notion of cultural superiority has seriously harmed the United States in this century in its dealings with other peoples . . . If we are to gain the friendship of the new nations, and strengthen our ties with much older nations . . . we must give our children the ability to move with ease and respect in cultures other than their own."

No longer can our school policies, both state and local, ignore or forbid the use of the mother tongue for learning and for communication. In California the laws now permit the instruction in other than English. This is a powerful weapon for change and progress. A direct action program for you in Colorado can be to assure that such a stumbling block does not hamper bilingual-bicultural education here. Another means of changing the "point of view" of the schools.

This commitment by California when coupled with the national commitment in Title VII says that no longer can we retreat from our educational responsibilities to educate equally the non-English speaking youngster through the utilization of his mother tongue. No longer under the flag of "Americanism" or "melting pot" can we say the English shall be the only language of the school. Bilingual education will provide a learning process through the mother tongue--followed closely by the learning of English. Then both languages will produce a bilingual-bicultural citizen with abilities to serve effectively himself and his society. And, to me, this is what education is all about.

Bilingual education serves five positive purposes for the child and the school. It reduces retardation through ability to learn with the mother tongue immediately. It reinforces the relations of the school and the home through a common communication bond. It projects the individual into an atmosphere of personal identification, self-worth, and achievement. It gives the student a base for success in the world of work. It preserves and enriches the cultural and human resources of a people.

Bilingual education is not a substitute for a well developed educational program; nor is it the saviour of a poor program. Its role is a viable thread of strength in the total program. And it needs to be woven in very carefully. I fear that in too many cases attempts will be made to thrust bilingual education into a good or poor educational environment, and when something goes wrong--blame bilingual education. But I want to see us get underway despite these potential dangers.

I want to mention some important considerations as bilingual education moves into schools. I am concerned about the sensitivity of the Office of Education in the administration of Title VII. This is not just another law to be poured into the regular gears of administrative machinery. And with the same operators at the controls. It will require a high degree of perception of the linguistic and cultural attitudes, feelings and needs of the people for

whom the programs will be designed. And this same sensitivity and perception must be even more present in the development of programs in the local schools and universities. Let's not get hung-up on matters of administrative experience--or credentials--or degrees--or seniority in seeking out and placing in positions of policy and administration, Mexican-Americans who have the linguistic competency and the cultural background to make bilingual-bicultural education a success. Mexican-Americans are still greatly under-used in those school programs where their skills are an absolute must. There must be full, continuing participation by the Mexican-American community--professional and non-professional--in the implementation of bilingual education. I don't subscribe to the idea that "you have to be one to teach one" but true cultural insight is in short supply--and we better use those whose insight is inborn--not acquired.

I see Title VII as a mandate for movement. What can you do to start this movement? You can learn what bilingual education is all about. Your professional associations have or can get publications describing the concepts and operational guidelines for bilingual education. You should demand that your school district set up workshops to focus on bilingual education. If you are on curriculum committees or have any input into instruction, raise the question of bilingual education for your youngsters. Survey your own school and school district to determine the needs and the scope of the problem. Insist that some new priorities in your Title I and Title III funds be made with bilingual education as the highest priority--particularly in the primary grades. Your role as a teacher in learning about bilingual education, preparing yourself for this program, and demanding that your school implement the program is most critical to change and progress.

You can not wait for funds from Title VII. They may be pitifully little and much too late. We must move on this need with or without funds from

Title VII. The message today is "Get with it!" Recently a Superintendent in a large city school district said, "We will have bilingual education programs with or without Federal funds." I want to see that attitude grow and spread throughout the Southwest.

The national commitment for bilingual education is a strong moral and psychological force for change. This commitment needs only the force of your action. The most powerful resource you can use in your school is your determination to "get with it."